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I am the Mother of a child with a neurological disorder and the Aunt/Guardian to a nephew who also has a neurological disorder. Both of these boys are prescribed medication so they can function and live a productive life to the best of their abilities. Having been the caretaker of both of these boys I would not want to explain to one of them that they were not eligible to receive services due to the type of neurological disorder they were diagnosed with. Both of these boys have been discriminated and stigmatized by friends, family, acquaintances, and now possible by our government. Or I should say only one of these boys will continue to face discrimination as one is diagnosed with Bipolar and the other with Aspergers. Covering children with autism is good...covering all children with brain disorders would be better! The type of neurological disorder does not matter when it comes to Mental Health Parity.

It was said during testimony last week that Mental Health Parity will not provide coverage for children with Autism. This is simply not true. Many other states, including California, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana and New Jersey to name a few, have Mental Health Parity laws that either specifically state coverage of Autistic individuals or provide broad-based coverage not specifying specific diagnosis. Recently in Washington state, whose parity law is broad-based, not specifying autism, blanket exclusion of services for autistic individuals was ruled illegal under the state's parity law. I support coverage for children with Autism but I fail to see why we would not want to pass coverage for all with brain disorders.

By limiting coverage to just those children who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorders is discriminating to all those that are diagnosed with other neurological disorders. Families whose children are covered by private insurance already pay for insurance coverage that is allowed to limit or deny their children access to treatments that are medically necessary and evidence based. Now we are about to tell those same families that they must also pay to fund coverage for children with Autism. It is adding insult to injury.

A lot has been said about the 'evidence base' to Applied Behavior Analysis and how effective this treatment is for Autism. But it should also be known that there are 'evidence based practices' for children with mental health disorders, too. And evidence based practices, such as Parent Management Training Oregon Model, are available in Michigan. The unfortunate fact is that the only way you can access them currently is if your child draws services from the public mental health system. Another area that insurance companies, as long as Michigan continues to discriminate against those with brain disorders other than Autism, will continue to deny children access to.

As a Mother it was devastating to learn my child was being diagnosed with a mental illness. But as a mother I wanted the best care for my son just as any other parent would want the best care for their child. However, what I did not realize at the time was that my

private insurance would only cover 50% of the cost of my son's care. This was unbelievable to me that when my son harmed himself from suicide attempts that his medical care was covered 100% but the care for his mental illness was limited. The cost of one bill for my son's treatment was over \$40,000.00. Families should not be placed in situations where they may become homeless or have to give up custody of their children just to ensure that their child receives affordable mental health services.

It has been said that we should not let perfect get in the way of good and I agree. But you are not in a position to have to choose good versus perfect because the mechanism exists to do both.

I am asking you to support Mental Health Parity in addition to supporting coverage for children with Autism by including a Mental Health Parity bill with SB 414, 415, and 981.